



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



TRANSPORTATION SUMMIT

This week, the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs hosted a Veterans Transportation Summit in Pierre. Representatives from SDDVA, DOT, the USDVA, tribes, public transit, and veterans service organizations met to discuss what transportation services that are and can be available for veterans in South Dakota.

Recognizing the problems veterans who are visually impaired, elderly, or immobilized due to disease or disability, particularly those living in remote and rural areas, face in traveling to access VA health care, participants discussed options of programs, services and funding.

Ultimately, the goal is to provide our veterans with the most convenient and timely access to transportation services. The VA is working to establishing a network of community transportation service providers that could include veteran service organizations; community and commercial transportation providers; federal, state and local government transportation services as well as non-profits.

"This summit provided us a great opportunity to hear what is currently available for transportation for all veterans across the state," said SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman. "My goal is to continue to educate leaders within our veterans network and especially the 32 South Dakota counties that are considered 'highly rural areas' about the grants that are available to them."

Tom Pranger, VABHHCS, has been working with groups to secure the federal rural transportation grants and is a great resource for leaders to work with (Tom's contact information is as follows: 605-745-2000 – ext 2184 – email: Thom.as.Pranger@va.gov).

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Veterans Transportation Service



Heroes Among Us—showcasing 125 South Dakota veterans.



HUFFMON JOINS SDDVA TEAM

William Andrew Huffmon (Will) has joined the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs team and will serve as the field officer for western South Dakota.

Originally from Napa, CA, Will served in the United States Air Force from 1993—2013 (13 years as a B1-B avionics technician and seven years as a chaplain's assistant. Most of his 20 years was spent at Ellsworth Air Force Base, but did tours to Korea and southwest Asia.

Will has associates degrees in social services and avionics systems technologies.

Will and his wife Sherrie reside in Rapid City and spend as much time as possible spoiling their children Allison (16) and Christian (10). Will is an avid outdoorsman and loves to fish and hunt. Will is an insane San Francisco Forty-Niners and San Francisco Giants fan (we won't hold that against him!).

Will said he is excited about working for SDDVA because he knows the work is meaningful and at the end of the day he will be able to go home knowing he made a difference in the lives of his brothers and sisters who also wore the uniform.

After weeks of training, Huffmon will be based out of the Rapid City office (2525 W. Main Street—Suite 303A #3. His cell phone number is 605-280-4307 and his email address is: William.huffmon@state.sd.us.

Please join us in welcoming Will to the SDDVA team!!!!



SDDVA CLAIMS OFFICE GETS MAJOR RENOVATION

This week, the SDDVA Sioux Falls Claims Office went through a major renovation. Privacy walls were installed to allow for offices vs. cubicles.

SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman notes, "Veterans will now be able to meet with their veterans service officers in a quiet environment that offers privacy. We are all about customer service, putting these walls up will enable us to improve our already stellar customer service to our heroes and their loved ones!"

Deputy Secretary Pollard feels this project was long overdue. "This new office space will give all veterans a proper setting for discussions and care," said Pollard.



NGB VICE CHIEF VISITS GOLDEN COYOTE EXERCISE

The Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Air Force Lt. Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel, visited one of the largest and longest-running National Guard exercises in the country this week, Golden Coyote. The Joint Chiefs of Staff member visited the 30th annual training exercise June 8-9 throughout western South Dakota and at Camp Guernsey, Wyoming.

Hosted by the South Dakota Army National Guard and held in the Black Hills National Forest and Custer State Park – the two-week exercise, which began June 7 and continues until June 21, provides National Guard, Reserve and active-duty military units with relevant training opportunities in support of overseas contingency operations and homeland support missions.

"I came to talk to the service members," said Lengyel. "I wanted to see what kind of training they are conducting and hear their perspective to find out what we can do to help them become better soldiers and airmen in the National Guard."

"It was a distinct honor to show the vice chief the excellent training that occurs during our Golden Coyote exercise," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, the adjutant general of the South Dakota National Guard. "The best salesmen and women we have are the soldiers, sailors and airmen who participate each year."

This year, more than 4,400 service members from 45 units representing 15 states, which includes soldiers from five allied nations from the United Kingdom, Denmark, Canada, Suriname and Germany, are participating in the exercise. Units come from multiple branches of military service – Army, Navy and Air Force – to conduct combat support and combat service support missions in a realistic environment and work together to create an invaluable training experience.

During the two day tour, Lengyel stopped to see first-hand how the Missouri National Guard's 311th Brigade Support Battalion, purifies 1,500 gallons an hour for the exercise.

"It was a great opportunity, for Alpha Company Soldiers to demonstrate the capabilities of the tactical water purification system," said Capt. Ryan Borgmeyer, unit commander. "It was awesome to see that Lt. Gen. Lengyel was willing to go the extra mile and drink a sample out of the purification system itself."

Not only did Lengyel learn how the 311th is providing water to three forward operating bases but he took the time to talk to the soldiers about their careers, said Borgmeyer.



NGB VICE CHIEF VISITS GOLDEN COYOTE EXERCISE (CONTINUED)

It was outstanding that Lt. Gen. Lengyel would talk to the soldiers about the continuation of their service," said Borgmeyer. "It meant a lot to the troops."

Another highlight during Lengyel's visit was witnessing an airborne assault mission consisting of a mass-tactical, four-ship airborne operation for the first time during Golden Coyote and Army National Guard history at Camp Guernsey.

Two-hundred and fifty paratroopers from the Texas Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 143rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne) exited out of the C-130s and landed to secure the John Edmunds drop zone as they infiltrated Golden Coyote.

"This is the first time in Army National Guard history that we have been able to drop hundreds of soldiers in one fell swoop," said Maj. Max H. Krupp, 1-143rd commander, who greeted Lengyel shortly after jumping. "We usually only have two aircraft, but this operation shows that we are diverse and our capabilities are comparable to the active duty."

Lengyel expressed how great the Golden Coyote exercise is because of the realistic training opportunities from the truck drivers hauling equipment hundreds of miles to setting up a forward operating base in muddy conditions on a rainy day.



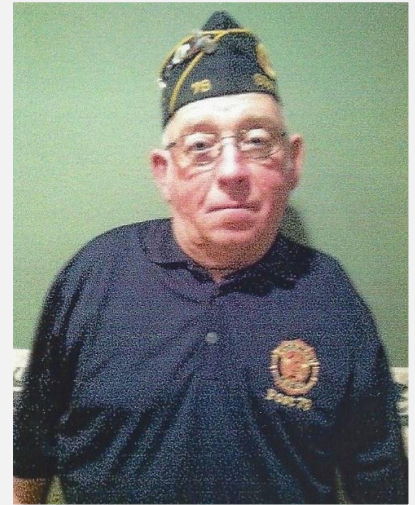
"This has been a great opportunity to step away from Washington, D.C. and see service members train," said Lengyel. "I have found that Golden Coyote is a fantastic exercise. These are real missions soldiers and airmen are able to do for annual training. This reinforces how the National Guard is an important part of the United States Army. To see us all come together for this exercise makes me more convinced that the Army National Guard is a better force than it's ever been in its 377th year."

HEROES AMONG US

After graduating from Gettysburg High School, Richard McGee served in the United States Army from November 1965 until November 1967. Richard attended basic training at Fort Hood Texas, and then went to Fort Bragg North Carolina for AIT training and Fort Riley Kansas for combat training before completing a tour of duty in Vietnam with the 3rd Battalion 34th Artillery 9th Infantry Division. In 1967 he separated from the service at the rank of E5.

McGee has been a member of the American Legion Post 79 in Onida since 1990 and is currently a life member. He has served as 2nd Vice Commander, 1st Vice Commander, Commander, Children and Youth Officer, and Chaplain. Having served on many committees, McGee was named District 10 Legionnaire of the Year in 1999, and is a member of the Past Commanders Club, the Color Guard and the Firing Squad.

Thank you Richard for your service to this great country and to South Dakota's veterans!!!!



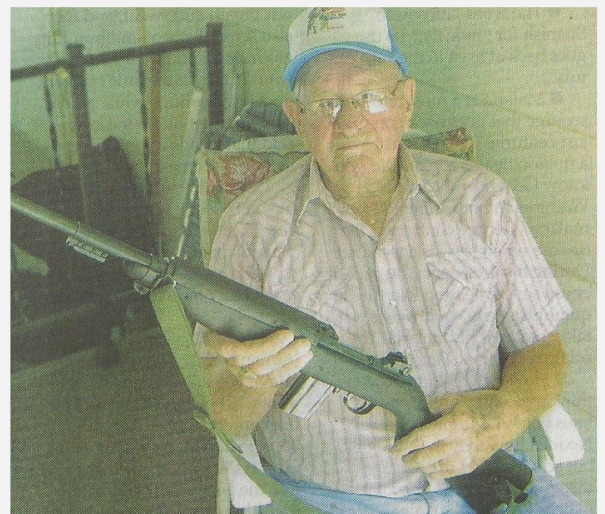
HEROES AMONG US

Donald Bren grew up on a farm in the Toronto area and graduated from White High School in 1950, near the time North Korea invaded South Korea. In 1951 he was farming with his dad and working for a local farmer when his draft notice showed up in the mailbox.

Bren and four friends enlisted in the United States Air Force and ended up at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio. His eight weeks of basic training were cut to six. He was stationed at Mather Field, Chanute Air Force Base, and later became a senior bomb navigation technician. He went to Korea via a 15-day sea voyage and landed at Pusan. He later was moved farther north and flew on B-26 bombers to test the bombsights. Bren also served at Johnson Air Force Base in Japan and on Okinawa. In November of 1955 he was discharged from active duty and returned to South Dakota.

Don is a 40 year member of the DAV and has been recognized as SD DAV Veteran of the year. Don has logged over 2,500 hours in support of and has driven over 15,000 miles as a DAV van driver.

Thank you Don for your service to this great country and to the veterans of South Dakota.



(Information for this story was provided by John Kubal, Brookings Register)

VABHHCS SCHEDULES MORE SCOPING MEETINGS

Additional scoping meetings have been scheduled by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to invite comments from veterans, stakeholders, government agencies, and members of the public for an environmental impact statement (EIS) regarding the reconfiguration of the VA Black Hills Health Care System. The VA is also extending the public comment period for EIS scoping from June 16, 2014 to August 16, 2014.

The EIS will evaluate the proposal to realign services and resources to provide high-quality, safe, accessible, and cost-effective care closer to where veterans live. Six alternatives to implement the proposal, a supplemental re-use alternative, and no action will be assessed. Consultation on potential effects to historic resources, as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, will be integrated into this EIS process. The VA requests input on the development of the alternatives, potential environmental impacts from any alternative, and suggestions to mitigate impacts.

The content and format of the public scoping meetings at each location will be the same.

June 24—Pine Ridge—1:30 – 3:30 p.m. (Prairie Wind Casino Convention Center, Lakota Dome Room U.S. 18, Pine Ridge)

June 24—Chadron, NE—7:00 – 9:00 p.m. (Chadron State College, Student Center Ballroom—1000 Main Street, Chadron)

June 25—Alliance, NE—1:30 – 3:30 p.m. (Alliance High School, Performing Arts Center—1450 Box Butte Avenue)

June 25—Scottsbluff, NE—7:00 – 9:00 p.m. (Gering Civic Center—1050 M Street)

June 26—Mission—1:00 – 3:00 p.m. (Sinte Gleska University, Multipurpose facility/Gym—101 Antelope Circle)

June 26—Pierre—7:00 – 9:00 p.m. (Ramkota, Amphitheater II—920 W Sioux Ave)

June 27—New Castle, WY—1:30 – 3:30 p.m. (U.S. Forest Service Office—1225 Washington Boulevard)

Doors will open 30 minutes before each meeting so participants can review displays and obtain handouts and forms for written comments. Following a brief presentation, the public will have the opportunity to provide oral comments regarding the VA's proposed reconfiguration of the Black Hills Health Care System.

Those who cannot attend or who prefer to provide written comments are encouraged to participate by submitting comments no later than August 16, 2014:

By email to vablackhillsfuture@va.gov

Online at www.regulations.gov, Docket ID VA-2014-VACO-0002

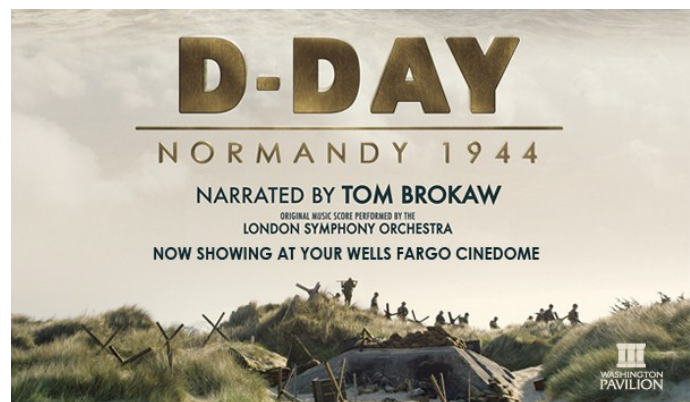
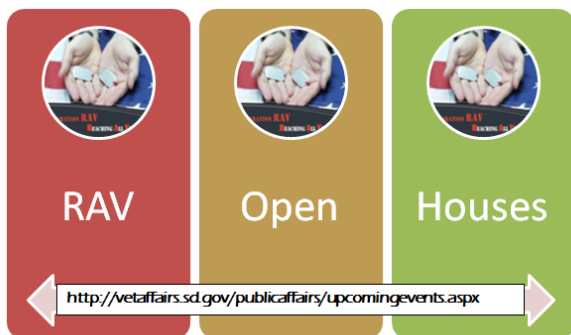
Submit direct to EIS contractor at www.blackhillseis.com (with option to submit anonymously)

By mail to: Staff Assistant to the Director
VA Black Hills Health Care System
113 Comanche Road
Fort Meade, SD 57741

Upcoming Events

2014

Jun. 14—SD Marine Corps League State Convention—Pierre Post 8 Legion Cabin—10:30 am
 Jun. 19-22—American Legion State Convention—Ramkota Hotel—Pierre
 Jul. 7—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—BHNC—9:00 am
 Jul. 16—SD Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am
 Aug. 6—DOL Veterans/Guardsmen/Reservists/Spouses Job Fair—Augustana College Elmen Center—10:00 am—2:00 pm
 Aug. 22—SFVAHCS Stand Down—Sioux City, IA
 Aug. 25-29—NACVSO Training Ramkota Hotel—Pierre
 Sept. 5—SFVAHCS Stand Down—Watertown
 Sept. 11—SFVAHCS Stand Down—Wagner
 Sept. 19—SFVAHCS Stand Down—Sioux Falls
 Oct. 6—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—BHNC—9:00 am



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